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MEMORIAL

OF

Committee of Pioneer Silk Growers

OF

CALIFORNIA

TO THE LEGISLATURE.

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MEMORIAL.

To the Honorable the Senate and Assembly of the State of California:

The undersigned, a committee appointed by the Pioneer Silk Growers and Manufacturers' Association of California, for the purpose of memorializing the Legislature in favor of the silk culture of the State, beg leave most respectfully to submit for your candid and careful consideration the following facts and suggestions:

The production of silk is confined by climatic influences to but few countries, and flourishes best in a warm, dry climate, where the atmosphere is well charged with electricity, but where that electricity is not subject to sudden changes, as by lightning and thunder storms. France, Italy, Prussia, and other countries in the central and southern portions of Europe, which have been for a long time the principal countries from which the world has been supplied with raw silk, have been experiencing for the last half century a gradual change of climate unfavorable to silk culture, so that they are forced to import annually, from dryer countries, the eggs, in order to secure the health of their worm and a consequent crop of silk. Even with this precaution, great fears are entertained by those countries that they will be obliged give up its cultivation as a leading article of industry and export.

The Government of England seeing this fact, and quick to take advantage of it, is putting forth extra exertions by subsidies to individual, and other encouragement, and endeavoring by the establishment of the silk culture in her East India possessions, to supplant these countries in supplying the world with silk; and she has already become an exporter of more manufactured silks than all other nations combined.

While the production of silk is thus confined to limited portions of the earth by climatic and other causes, the consumption has been rapidly increasing, so that instead of being an article of luxury only indulged in by a few, as was the case but twenty years ago, it has now become, by the customs of society, one of the necessaries of life, constituting in some shape a part of the clothing worn by almost every man, woman, and child in every country and in every community. The value of the annual importations of silk into the United States must strike every one who has not given the matter a careful examination, with amazement, and those who have examined the subject and appreciate its magnitude,

are even greater wonderers that no effective steps have been taken by our general government to supply, to some extent at least, the enormous demand for the consumption of our people.

In general terms we will state that the average annual value of such importation for the last ten years has been from twenty-five million to thirty million dollars, showing a constant and rapid increase from year to year. From official reports of the commerce of the United States for eighteen hundred and sixty-six, we learn that the value of raw and manufactured silks imported during that year was thirty-one million seven hundred and ninety-three thousand eight hundred and one dollars. Upon this was paid in impost duties, by the importers, the sum of sixteen million five hundred and forty-seven thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight dollars, making the value in the custom houses, not counting other expenses, forty-eight million three hundred and forty-one thousand six hundred and seventy-four dollars.

The above is the value of the import of raw silk and goods of *all* silk. The value of mixed goods, composed in a greater part of silk, for that year, was two million four hundred and ten thousand and sixty-eight dollars. The duty on the same—eight hundred and forty-three thousand five hundred and twenty-three dollars—being added, increases the value of these goods in the custom house to three million two hundred and fifty-three thousand five hundred and ninety-one dollars, which being added to the forty-eight million three hundred and forty-one thousand six hundred and seventy-four dollars, makes the whole value of silks imported, including impost duties, fifty-one million five hundred and ninety-five thousand one hundred and fourteen dollars.

To show the real cost to the importers, there should be added to this sum, for insurance, freight, interest, wharfage, and other incidental expenses, at least ten per cent., making fifty-six million seven hundred and fifty-four thousand six hundred and twenty-five dollars. Would we follow the examination still further, in order to ascertain the amount of money the people of the United States—the consumers—really pay annually for the silks worn by them, we must add to this sum at least twenty-five per cent., or fourteen million one hundred and eighty-eight thousand six hundred and fifty-five dollars, to cover profits to importers, jobbers and retailers, making the enormous sum of seventy million nine hundred and forty-three thousand two hundred and eighty dollars.

In the above statement, the value of the silk imported into the revenue district of New Orleans is not included, the same not having been received by the revenue department when the amount reported was published. The addition would probably increase the above figures to over eighty million dollars, and when the relations of the southern States shall have been fully restored, and industry and social intercourse shall have been again established, it is not out of the way to assume that the consumption of silk in these States will be at least one third what it is in the northern States.

With these figures before us, is it strange that we should begin to look about us to see if we have not somewhere within our borders a country adapted to the culture of the silk? Is it not the duty of statesmen not only to try and find such place, but when found, to stimulate the cultivation of silk by granting such liberal Government aid to individuals as will most certainly give the subject a thorough test, and to extend such aid through a number of years until the industry is thoroughly established on a sure foundation?

The Government or State whose people pay such a tribute to the industry of other countries, and neglects to do this, is most certainly derelict to its own interests and duties, and neglectful of the interests and welfare of its own people.

In the Atlantic States the experiment of introducing the silk culture has been tried for a succession of years, but has been finally most entirely abandoned, for the reasons: first, that no Government aid was extended to those who were disposed to go into it in good faith, and repeated failures and bankruptcy of individuals who begun the production of trees more for speculative motives than otherwise, so discouraged those who had the success of the industry at heart, that all gave it up; and we hear of it now only as the "*multicaulis* speculation."

The second reason why it failed in the Atlantic States is found in the fact that in the warmer portions of the country—the southern States—where it should have succeeded, if anywhere, and where the climate is almost as favorable, and perhaps equally so, to the health and vigor of the worm, and consequent success of the business, as that of France or Italy, yet the atmosphere is too damp, and they have so frequent thunder showers and shocks of electricity, that if in those States silk could be produced with tolerable success, it is probable that like Italy and France they would have annually to resort to dry and more favorable climates for their eggs, which would be a great drawback to the success or profits of the business.

Another reason, and one that has been too generally overlooked by writers on the subject, why the silk culture failed in the southern States is found in the fact that just about the time that experiments were being made there the cotton gin was invented and introduced, and this gave to cotton growing such a stimulus that all other industries were lost sight of, and the whole country turned its attention to the production of cotton.

But now we turn to our own State, California—and what do we find here? While we have a soil and climate which is a marvel to the world for the production and perfection of all other animal and vegetable life, yet it seems as though nature has selected this spot and concentrated all her energies and laws in producing here all the conditions most favorable for the fullest perfection of the mulberry tree, and its natural accompaniment, the silkworm. Experiments already made in the culture of the tree and the feeding of the worms, have been so favorable as to warrant the belief in results far advance of anything found in their history in any other time or country.

Here, in our dry, pure, and equable climate, the leaf of the mulberry secures the most abundant nourishment and the most perfect texture and fibre.

Here, during the season for feeding the worms, from June to October, we have no rains to wet the food, no sudden changes in the atmosphere to check the growth of the worms, no explosions of electricity or thunder storms to benumb or kill them. And during experiments conducted by an experienced and careful hand for the last ten years in San José, and by many other persons for the last three or four years in all portions of the State, not a diseased worm has been discovered. While in all other countries the loss from these causes is scarcely ever less than twenty-five per cent., and frequently more than thirty-three, here it may be said to be absolutely nothing.

Nor are these all or even the greatest advantages we possess; but as a result of them, one man can feed and take care of as many worms in

California as from seven to eight men can in Italy, France, or any of the at present great silk growing countries of Europe.

Again: cocoons produced in California and sent to experts in France, have uniformly been pronounced the best the world has ever shown.

The eggs of our worms, when transferred to France or Italy, have already established such a reputation that orders for them far exceeding the whole quantity ever produced in the State, and much above our present facilities to produce, have been sent here; and one of your memorialists has been solicited to act as agent for dealers in France in selecting and exporting to meet the foreign demand.

In view of the facts above enumerated, the many advantages California possesses over all the old silk producing countries, the enormous price of silk, and the already so great and rapidly increasing consumption by the people of the United States, and the foreign demand for the worm's eggs, our last Legislature passed a law for the encouragement of silk culture in California, by promising to pay a premium of two hundred and fifty dollars for each plantation of five thousand trees of the age of two years, and three hundred dollars for each one hundred thousand cocoons; the law by its terms to continue in force two years as to trees, and four years as to cocoons. At the time this law was passed there were but very few mulberry trees in the State, and no seed from which to produce them; consequently, comparatively nothing was done in eighteen hundred and sixty-six towards accomplishing the object the law was designed to effect.

Mr. Prevost, one of your memorialists, who has spent the last ten years of his life and a competency in proving the adaptation of his adopted State to the culture of silk and endeavoring to bring the facts before the people, that the State might be benefitted by the industry, has received for trees raised by him and for all the cocoons produced during all these tedious years of toil, and experiment, and waiting, the pitiful sum of five hundred and sixty-two dollars and fifty cents in premiums, a sum scarcely sufficient to pay for the postage stamps he has used on letters written by him within that time, trying to introduce his favorite industry among a people deaf to his advice and recommendations, and negligent of what he was proving to them was their own best interests. The heirs of the late Wilson Flint, who during his lifetime did as much for the agricultural reputation of the State as any man now living, and a surviving partner, have also received the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars in premiums under the law, a sum not equal to one hundredth part of the value of the damage done by the late high water to property, most of which was acquired by them in view of the inducements held out by the conditions of the law.

During the year eighteen hundred and sixty-seven, and the last year in which seed can be planted, and the trees claim premiums under the law, there has been by the combined efforts of all who have been induced to go into the business, from three to five hundred thousand trees raised, and there has been produced besides those for which a premium has already been paid, one hundred thousand cocoons, for which the State is liable to the amount of three hundred dollars.

Another fact which it may be well to mention as having a very great bearing upon this industry, and which is very much to be regretted, is, that there is not now in the State more than five persons who have any eggs from which to hatch the worms for the production of cocoons in eighteen hundred and sixty-eight, and the entire amount of eggs in the State does not exceed about three pounds.

Your memorialists regard it as a matter of great regret for the interests of the State that greater success has not attended the efforts of those whose enterprise and public spirit has been called into action by the provisions of the law under consideration.

We believe that it would be greatly to the interests of the State if a scale of premiums, so graduated as to continue the encouragement of the business for a term of years after the expiration of the present law, could be offered by the present Legislature.

We believe that if the State were to be called upon during the next ten years for the amount of two hundred thousand dollars for premiums under the law, that amount of money would be better expended, and would benefit the State and people more than any two hundred thousand dollars that has ever yet been drawn from the treasury. Money paid by the State as premiums for the successful prosecution of an industry like silk culture, is only loaned to individuals, and will come back in a very few years in the shape of taxes with a hundredfold increase. California, according to official reports, is paying annually between six million and seven million dollars for silks imported. Would it not be better to pay even a quarter of a million in the course of ten years to her own citizens, if by so doing, after that time these citizens will supply this silk and thus keep this money at home, and add so much each year to the permanent wealth of the State? It seems to us that this would be a good financial operation, and a good point gained in political economy.

Ask England how she became the greatest manufacturing country in the world, and her answer is, by the encouragement of her manufactories by subsidies and bounties to individuals.

Ask Napoleon how France came to be the greatest wine and silk producing country in the world, and he will tell you by the fostering care and encouragement of the Government.

Ask Germany why mulberry trees are found growing on every roadside, and about every dwelling, and why every house is a cocoonery, and she will point to a law of her Diet compelling every owner of land to plant mulberry trees and make cocoons.

But we need not go away from home for examples of the good effects of Government aid to private enterprise. In eighteen hundred and sixty-two the State passed a general bounty law for the purpose of inducing and encouraging new branches of industry. Under the operations of that law, and the additional encouragements and aids held out by the State Agricultural Society, there has sprung into existence within our borders, cotton mills, woollen mills, powder mills, oil and white lead manufactories, paper factories, boot and shoe and leather factories, shot and lead factories, sugar factories, glass factories, resin factories, turpentine and beer distilleries, hop fields, cotton fields, tobacco fields, flax and hemp fields, and sugar beet fields—all creating property which contributes annually to the national and State revenues four times more money than the State has ever been called on by them for bounties under the law which has brought them into existence. These facts are capable of proof, and are familiar to one of your memorialists, whose business it has been for the last five years to watch and assist the operations of this law as he would watch the growth and conduct of a favorite child.

And yet, with all these facts—which are matters of history, and should be known to every one, and more especially to legislators—we learn with regret that there is now pending before the Legislature a bill to repeal the law of eighteen hundred and sixty-six for the encouragement

of silk culture in California. Let us examine for a moment the effect of such repeal. The Legislature could not now if they would—and we certainly cannot believe they would if they could—prevent the payment of the premiums on trees already planted, for the planting of the trees by individuals is the acceptance of a proposition made to them by the State, and there has by such acceptance become a solemn contract, and the money is as sure to be paid as though the warrants were already drawn on the Treasurer by the Controller. Therefore, as by the terms of the law, the State's liability for premiums on trees cannot now be changed, the only effect produced by a repeal of the law would be to prevent the payment of premiums on silk, and thus after paying premiums, or becoming liable therefor, on the trees, to discourage the use of those trees for the very object for which the State has created them, and render them comparatively valueless both to individuals and to the State.

The real object of the law was to encourage the production of *silk*, and to place the industry on such a sure road to success, and advance it to that position that individual enterprise, stimulated by profits to be derived from the business itself, could and would continue it until it became one of the permanent and profitable industries of the country. Individuals need this encouragement, and without it they *cannot and will not go on.* Manufactories cannot be established and maintained here unless the raw material is found for them to live upon, and there will be no raw material unless a demand is created in some way *for* that raw material.

The object of the law was to create that demand and stimulate the production until a sufficient amount was produced to start and maintain the factories; and after that let the factories step in and take the place of State aid. When this point is reached State aid will no longer be needed. The relations of producer and consumer, of demand and supply, will then have been established; the State will have accomplished her object in the passage of the law, and silk culture and manufacture in California will have become a fixed and valuable fact.

Another consideration. We doubt very much whether the State can by a repeal of the law dissolve her contract and withhold the premiums on cocoons she has promised from those parties who are now prepared with the trees and eggs for the production of silk. If a party has invested his money in eggs, he has accepted the proposition; and if he goes on in good faith and produces cocoons from those eggs, has he not fulfilled the contract on his part for the production of silk? Can one of the contracting parties dissolve the contract at will without the consent of the other?

But suppose the State could, after paying for the trees now growing, withhold the premiums for cocoons, would it be wise to do so? By so doing she would nip in the bud an industry which, if allowed to continue under her fostering care, and encouragement held out, would grow to be the first industry of the State. The wine interest, the wool interest, the grain interest, and even our *exhaustless mines* of precious metals would be but secondary to silk culture.

In proof of this proposition, we point to the value of our annual importations of silk, for which we are exporting an equal in value in gold to the amount of from seventy-five million to eighty million dollars per annum.

This demand is already at our doors, asking to be supplied. Shall we prepare to supply it, as we can, or shall we now, by adverse legislation, discontinue the effort?

The golden apple hangs invitingly at our very hands. Shall we put them forth and pluck it, and thus secure forever the prize for which the old countries are struggling; or shall we through neglect, through indifference, or through a want of energy and enterprise, coupled with a short-sighted cupidity, allow them to continue in triumph to carry it away from us?

Again: the impetus given silk culture by the passage of the law in question, has created a California silk fever in the silk producing countries of Europe.

The rich silk merchant, the business silk manufacturer, and the skilled silk producer, have their eyes and heads turned toward California, and if we continue the inducement they will soon be among us, putting out silk plantations, building silk cocooneries, establishing silk factories, and trading in our California produced silks. Shall we by adverse legislation turn this most valuable immigration from our shores, when the greatest of California's *wants is* immigration? or shall we continue to hold out the invitation given, and thus bring an industrious population among us?

All of which is most respectfully submitted.

I. N. HOAG,
W. WADSWORTH,
L. PREVOST,
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